



Community leaders offer a prayer for Aruba

The Plaza Betico Croes was filled with island dignitaries and community leaders on Thursday evening for the first event that will be the beginning of a number of events culminating in the thirtieth anniversary of the introduction of Aruba's National Anthem and Flag, Himno y Bandera Day, March 18th.

An important day of celebration and reflection on Aruba's past and future, it began with a solemn event featuring a prayer of thanks for the blessings Aruba has received by five religious leaders of all denominations that represent the diversity of the Aruban population.

Reverend Rolle of the Methodist Church lead the opening prayer and Father Jacobs of the Anglican Church gave a prayer of thanks in Papiamentu. All the languages that are spoken in Aruba were represented in messages of a gratitude for the prosperity that the island has received, and the vicissitudes it has survived to establish itself as an independent nation. Pastor Decker of the Protestant Church spoke in Dutch, Rabbi Marcelo Bater of the Temple Beth Israel presented his speech in Spanish, mixed with a bit of Hebrew, and Monsignor Luis Secco, the Bishop for the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba came to the island especially to address the gathering in Papiamentu. Father Jacobs also spoke again in English.

This year's celebration of Himno y Bandera day is a very special one, as Aruba is also celebrating twenty years of Status Aparte. Pastor Rolle in particular gave a thanks and a prayer to those that "have done so much in previous generations" to bring Aruba to this state of independence and prosperity.

Attending the event were Aruba's Governor in the name of the Queen, His Excellency Fredis Refunjol, and Aruba's Prime Minister, His Excellency Nelson Oduber, with their respective spouses. Also present for the evenings blessings were the Minister of Culture, Sports and Labor, the Honorable Ramon Lee, the President of the Parliament Mervyn Ras, and the members of Parliament. The message for the evening by most of the speakers, as the island reflects on its status and its symbols was one of gratitude for the many blessings the Lord has bestowed on the island and its inhabitants. However, each one expressed a reminder in some way that the success of Aruba as a country that will continue to grow and serve its people, was the need for all to look towards the education of the youth, and the continued emphasis on spiritual values, aside from a continued appreciation for those many blessings.

The evening ended with a word by the Minister of Culture, Ramon Lee, and the bestowing of a donation to the School Dun un Man (Give a Hand) for the Mentally Challenged. Monsignor Luis Secco gave a final benediction, and the evening closed with the singing Aruba's National Anthem.